

Kingston, NY -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today joined Hudson River Valley Greenway and local officials to announce that the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail has been designated a National Water Trail by the U.S. Department of Interior. Before coming to Congress, Hinchey used his position as Chairman of the Environmental Conservation Committee in the New York State Assembly to author and secure passage of state legislation that created the Hudson River Valley Greenway. He subsequently authored and secured passage of federal legislation to establish Hudson River Valley Heritage Area, which has supported and strengthened the Greenway. At the event, Hinchey and the other officials kicked off the annual Hudson River Valley Ramble, a series of events, which celebrate and highlight the region's historic, cultural, and recreational resources.

"This new federal designation further underscores the greatness of the Hudson River Valley Greenway Water Trail and will make it more prominent on a national level, which will further enhance the region's reputation and encourage increased tourism and economic activity," said Hinchey, who presented the federal plaque designating the system as a National Water Trail. "The announcement we are celebrating today is a testament to the hard work of grassroots activists and all those who love the Hudson River Valley and fought for this designation. I was very pleased to have written the legislation that created the Greenway and I am even more delighted to see this program flourish with a remarkable Water Trail that provides tremendous access to the Hudson River and the various sites along its banks."

The Hudson River Greenway Water Trail is a 256 mile Water Trail stretching from the Adirondack Park and Lake Champlain to Manhattan. It is designed with the goal of providing one or more access points every 10 miles or less along both shores of the river, and overnight accommodation sites every 15 miles or less. Currently, the water trail includes 96 designated public access sites. The Water Trail is one of the first in the nation to receive the National Water Trail designation.

"Designation as a National Water Trail propels the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail to the forefront of American recreational rivers," said Mark Castiglione, Acting Executive Director of the Hudson River Valley Greenway. "The Greenway and our federal, state, local, non-profit, and private sector partners have worked tirelessly to increase public access to the Hudson River. This designation highlights the great achievements that can result from this type of collaboration."

The National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)

is the primary administrator for the National Water Trail System. Karl Beard, New York Projects Director for the National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program said, "The National Park Service has been a close partner in the development of the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail and we are continuing to work with partners to create additional access points to it. We congratulate the Greenway on this well-deserved recognition which is another fine example of the Greenway's contributions to enriching the Hudson River Valley for all its citizens."

Before coming to Congress, Hinchey used his position as Chairman of the Environmental Conservation Committee in the New York State Assembly to author state legislation that created the Hudson River Valley Greenway with the goal of establishing an innovative program that would empower communities throughout the Hudson Valley to develop and implement plans that would improve their economic circumstances and enhance the quality of life for residents. The program, which has been immensely popular and successful, has utilized a "bottom up" approach to regional planning that combines local participation in planning with state and federal dollars in order to achieve the initiative's goals of protecting the incredible natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources of the Hudson Valley.

Immediately upon arriving in Congress in 1993, Hinchey began to work on federal legislation to create the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. In 1996, the congressman secured passage of that legislation, which was the first federal action formally recognizing the fundamentally significant role the people of the Hudson Valley played in the early development of America and its institutions. The purpose of this federal designation was to "recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the nation."

The Greenway, which Hinchey established, was already well-organized and effective by the time he secured congressional approval of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. At that point, the Greenway was designated as the local manager of the Heritage Area program. The establishment of the new federal program opened up opportunities for federal funding of Greenway initiatives. Under Hinchey's guidance as a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Congress has directed millions of dollars to the Heritage Area program, which directly complemented and augmented ongoing state Greenway initiatives.

The Hudson River Valley Ramble aims to bring people outside to enjoy the Hudson River Valley's distinct cultural heritage and the area's natural resources during four weekends in September. It also serves as an economic boost for the regional economy.

"For each of the past 12 years, the Hudson River Valley Ramble has showcased the remarkable natural beauty, historic legacy, and cultural richness of the region," Hinchey said. "This year's Ramble will be the best one yet! I encourage residents and visitors to explore the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area during the Ramble in September and take advantage of the any of the more than 200 guided hikes, bike tours, historic site walks, paddles, festivals and river exploration events."

Hinchey, who grew up along the banks of the Hudson River in both New York City and Saugerties, is also the author of the Hudson River Valley Special Resource Study Act, which would authorize the NPS to conduct a study on whether the Hudson River Valley should become a unit of the National Park system. In order for the Hudson River Valley to become part of the National Park System, a congressionally-authorized NPS study must be conducted. Hinchey's legislation would authorize such a study from Fort Edward in Washington County down through Westchester County. If the NPS's study finds that the Hudson River Valley would be a good fit as part of the National Park System then subsequent legislation would be needed to make that designation.

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